



Anxiety Workshop Meditation

*offered by the
MU Student Health Center*

Mindfulness Body meditation

Get into a comfortable position. Please, sit upright with your feet flat on the floor, your arms and legs uncrossed, and your hands resting in your lap. Allow your eyes to close gently (if you are comfortable doing so, pause for 10 seconds).

Take a few moments to connect to the movement of your breath and the sensations in your body (10).

Bring your attention to how your body feels, especially to the sensations of touch and pressure, where your body makes contact with the chair.

Now, slowly bring your attention to the gentle rising and falling of your breath in your belly. Like waves coming in and out, your breath is always there. Notice its rhythm (pause). Notice each breath (pause). Focus on each inhale... and exhale (pause). Notice how the patterns of sensations in your belly change as you breathe in, and as you breathe out (pause).

Take a few moments to feel the physical sensations as you breathe in and as you breathe out (pause).

There is no need to try to control your breathing – let the breath breathe itself (pause). As best as you can, bring this attitude of gentle acceptance to the rest of your experience. Nothing needs to be fixed, no particular state needs to be achieved. As best as you can, simply allow your experience to be, it is your experience, it does not need to be anything other than what it is (15 seconds).

Sooner or later, your mind starts to wander from the breath. It may move to other concerns, thoughts, worries, images, bodily sensations, planning, or daydreams, or it may just drift along. This is what our minds do much of the time.

When you notice your mind has wandered, congratulate yourself- you have come back and are once more aware of your experience. You may want to acknowledge briefly where your mind has been (Ah, there is thinking or there's feeling).

Then quietly bring your attention back to the sensation of your breath (in and out;10). As best as you can, bring gentleness, kindness, and compassion to your awareness. When your mind wanders it is an opportunity to bring patience and gentle curiosity to your experience (15).

When you become aware of feelings, tension, or other intense sensations in a particular part of your body, just notice them, acknowledge their presence, and see if you can make space for them (10). Do not try to hold on to them or make them go away (10). See if you can make some room for the discomfort, for the tension, for the anxiety. Just allow them to be there (10). Is there enough space in you to welcome in all of your experience? (15)

Notice how your sensations change from moment to moment. Sometimes they grow stronger (10), sometimes they stay the same (10), sometimes they grow weaker – it does not matter (10). Breathe calmly in to and out from the sensations of discomfort (10), imagine the breath moving in to and out from that region of the body (10). Remember, your intention is not to make you feel better but to get better at feeling (15).

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If you notice that you have trouble focusing on your breathing because of physical discomfort in your body, it is okay to let go of your focus on the breath and instead focus on the place of discomfort. Gently direct your attention on and into the discomfort and stay with it no matter how bad it seems (10). Examine it, what does it really feel like? (10) Again, see if you can make room for it and allow it to be there (10). Are you willing to be with whatever you have (15)?

Along with physical sensations in your body, you may also notice thoughts about the sensations and thoughts about the thoughts (10). You may notice your mind coming up with evaluative labels such as “dangerous” or “getting worse.” If that happens, you can thank your mind for the identification (pause) and return to the present experience as it is, not as your mind says it is, noticing thoughts as thoughts, physical sensations as physical sensations, feelings as feelings – nothing more, nothing less (15).

To help you experience the difference between yourself and your thoughts and feelings, you can name them as you notice them. For instance, if you notice you are worrying, silently say to yourself “worry, there is worry,” just observing worrying and not judging yourself for having these thoughts and feelings (10). If you find yourself judging, just notice and name it, “judging, there is judging,” observe it with kindness and compassion (10). You can do the same thing with other thoughts and feelings you experience (planning, reminiscing, longing, or whatever you experience). Label your thought or emotion, and move on (10).

Thoughts and feelings come and go in your body and mind. You are not your thoughts and feelings, you are not what they say, no matter how persistent or intense they may be (15 seconds). Continue to breathe deeply and slowly.

Now that we are done with this exercise, gradually widen your attention to take in the sounds around you. Notice your surroundings (pause). Slowly open your eyes with the intention to bring this awareness to the present moment and into the upcoming moments of the day.